

JUNE 13, 1985

Last year I think it was, Congress was in an awful heat to make working unpapered aliens against the law. As I remember the case, the proposed law was going to make working big bunches of wets illegal, but make two or three maids and gardeners like they use around Washington D.C., an exception. I might be wrong about that, but it's all academic today as the law didn't pass off on some other important topic and forgot the matter.

Deregulated wet Mexicans haven't worked out in the ranch country. About 15 or 20 years ago, the last cowboy from Northern Mexico stopped working in the Shortgrass Country. They were replaced by sandal-shod oxen drivers and corn and bean farmers that couldn't have rounded up the holding pen at the rodeo grounds without missing 15 head the first time around.

I kept waiting for the Border Patrol and Congress to protect me from hiring these fellows at the ranch. Like a lot of deregulated business, it sounded good to have a steady supply of illegal entrants walking through the ranch until I caught on that we were just fattening these hombres so they could go in to be dairy hands and golf course attendants to the north of us.

About the 68th time I loaned my phone to a wet to talk to his brother in Dallas or his sister-in-law in Tulsa, I closed up my ranch food bank and suggested to these flour tortilla eaters that they work to pay their own way to the cities without the 30-day layover and the 30-pounds gain in weight I'd seen subsidizing at no thanks to any of the profiting the country.

Next I stopped hiring anyone who had legs long enough to reach the clutch of the feed wagon or the stirrups of a saddle on any of our horses, the saving in stripped gears, burned out clutches and soreback horses was of immediate advantage. Like cutting off the telephone privileges, I gained instant relief by measuring the pant inseam of prospects and culling out everyone who reached a size 28 trouser length.

Mexican workers that can't speak English are considered stupid, and the ones that are bilingual are branded as smart alecs. I wasn't looking for either type. What I wanted was one that would listen to my commands and follow them without any comment. The closest I came to that objective was an old man so deaf that he couldn't hear anything except potatoes frying in a cast iron skillet. He did know the word for television and air conditioner in English, but seemed to have a black-out when I asked him to grub pear or dig a posthole.

I don't blame the Border Patrol for not helping us. They all get regular paychecks and apprehend men that are gainfully employed. The green shirts can't understand the instability of the ranching game. I've often sensed that they felt too sorry for us to do an effective job. I sure can't fault them for chasing wet Mexicans, as they are much better game than messing with a bunch of broke down herders.

One sensible solution, and certainly a less politically dangerous one, is to make ranching illegal. Part of the support of illegal alien legislation is the humanitarian aspect of the movement. I really think that the wets and the Border Patrol could work out an

agreement among themselves. And I know for sure they'd feel a lot better if we were out of the picture completely.